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Report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (for the period from 17 January to 17 July 2000)

I. Introduction

1. The present report is submitted in pursuance of Security Council resolution 1288 (2000) of 31 January 2000, by which the Council extended the mandate of the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) for a further period of six months, until 31 July 2000. It covers developments since the previous report, dated 17 January 2000 (S/2000/28). During this period, the Secretary-General reported twice to the Security Council on the implementation of Council resolutions 425 (1978) and 426 (1978) (S/2000/460, S/2000/590 and Corr.1). Matters covered in those reports are not repeated here, except in summary form.

II. Developments in the area of operation

2. The situation in the UNIFIL area of operation until May followed the pattern of attacks by armed elements on the Israel Defence Forces (IDF) and their Lebanese auxiliary, the de facto forces (DFF), and pre-emptive and retaliatory action by both.

3. There were a number of serious incidents, among them the assassination on 30 January of a senior commander of the de facto forces in his home village of Dibil. Early in February, a number of missile attacks by armed elements on IDF/DFF positions caused casualties among IDF/DFF personnel. On 8 February, the Israeli Air Force conducted raids against three power stations near Beirut, in the Bekaa Valley and near Tripoli. A dozen civilians were reported injured in those raids. On 9 February, Israeli aircraft attacked targets in the Iqlim al-Touffah region and a high-rise residential building in Tyre, where Hizbollah reportedly maintained an apartment. On 11 February, an Israeli soldier was killed and another wounded at Beaufort Castle by fire from armed elements. The Monitoring Group had gathered at Naqoura the same day, but failed to meet. It has not met since.

4. In the middle of March, hostilities occurred again. On 13 March the Israel Defence Forces shelled Al Mansuri. On 15 March, armed elements retaliated by firing a large number of rockets at Israeli positions, several of which impacted inside Israel. IDF/DFF counter-retaliated, using artillery, mortars, tanks and aircraft.

5. In the second half of April, the Israel Defence Forces handed over a number of positions to the de facto forces. These came under sustained attack by armed elements. The most violent exchange in this period began on 3 May, when IDF/DFF shelled Lebanese towns resulting in civilian casualties, including the death of two Lebanese women. This was followed by rocket fire by armed elements into Israel, which caused the death of an Israeli soldier and the wounding of 26 civilians in Qiryat Shimona. On 5 May, the Israeli Air Force struck two power stations near Beirut and other targets. Between January and May, a total of 24 civilians were killed and 108 injured, 12 of them killed and 93 wounded in May alone.

Israeli withdrawal

6. On 17 April, the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Israel, David Levy, sent formal notification to the

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Secretary-General that Israel would withdraw its forces present in Lebanon by July 2000, in full accordance with Security Council resolutions 425 (1978) and 426 (1978). The Secretary-General informed the Security Council of this notification on the same day (S/2000/322), stating that he had initiated preparations to enable the United Nations to carry out its responsibilities under those resolutions. On 20 April, the Security Council welcomed the Secretary-General's letter and endorsed his decision to initiate those preparations (S/PRST/2000/13).

7. Terje Roed-Larsen, Special Envoy of the Secretary-General, travelled to the region from 26 April to 9 May and reviewed with the Governments of Israel and Lebanon and other concerned Member States in the region the requirements established under these two resolutions for their full implementation.

8. Starting on 16 May, much sooner than anticipated, IDF/DFF began to vacate its positions, amid exchanges of fire. Beginning on 21 May, large crowds of Lebanese, accompanied by armed elements, entered villages in the Israeli-controlled area, and IDF/DFF vacated their positions in great haste. As at 24 May, those forces appeared to have vacated almost all positions in Lebanon, and were in the process of withdrawing from positions along the Israel/Lebanon border. On 22 May, the prison at Al-Khiam was opened by the local inhabitants and the prisoners were freed. The withdrawal by IDF/DFF was carried out mainly at night, under cover of artillery fire. At the same time, a large number of the de facto forces, together with their families, crossed into Israel. Others surrendered to the Lebanese authorities. Within a few days, those forces had completely disbanded. On 25 May, Foreign Minister Levy notified the Secretary-General that Israel had redeployed its forces in compliance with Security Council resolutions 425 (1978) and 426 (1978).

9. The requirements and tasks related to the implementation of Security Council resolutions 425 (1978) and 426 (1978) in the new circumstances were outlined in the Secretary-General's report of 22 May (S/2000/460), and endorsed by the Security Council (S/PRST/2000/18).

10. From 24 May to 7 June, the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General travelled to Israel, Lebanon and the Syrian Arab Republic to follow up on the implementation of the report of 22 May 2000 (S/2000/460). The United Nations cartographer and his team, assisted by UNIFIL, worked on the ground to identify a line to be adopted for the practical purpose of confirming the Israeli withdrawal. While this was not a formal border demarcation, the aim was to identify a line on the ground conforming to the internationally recognized boundaries of Lebanon, based on the best available cartographic and other documentary evidence. Markers were placed at selected points along the line of withdrawal between Israel and Lebanon and along the operational boundary between the areas of responsibility of UNIFIL and the United Nations Disengagement Observer Force (UNDOF). The work was completed on 7 June. According to the cartographic and other documentary evidence, the withdrawal line cut through the village of Ghajar, leaving part of it on the Lebanese side and part on the side of Israeli-occupied Syrian Arab Republic. A map showing the withdrawal line was formally transmitted by the Force Commander of UNIFIL to his Israeli and Lebanese counterparts. On 8 June, UNIFIL teams commenced the work of verifying the Israeli withdrawal behind the line.

11. On 16 June, the Secretary-General reported to the Security Council that UNIFIL had completed the verification process, and confirmed that Israeli forces had withdrawn from Lebanon in compliance with resolution 425 (1978) and met the requirements defined by the Secretary-General (S/2000/590 and Corr.1). Notwithstanding their reservations about the withdrawal line, the Governments of Israel and Lebanon both confirmed that identifying this line was solely the responsibility of the United Nations and that they would respect the line as identified. On 18 June, the Security Council welcomed the Secretary-General's report and endorsed the work done by the United Nations as mandated by the Council (S/PRST/2000/21). On 3 July, the United Nations cartographer briefed the Council on the technical means employed for the definition of the line.

12. Following the verification of the Israeli withdrawal, UNIFIL found a number of violations, where the Israeli technical fence crossed the withdrawal line and the Israel Defence Forces used patrol tracks that also crossed the line. The Security Council has been kept informed of those violations. For their part, the Israeli military authorities on 5 July informed UNIFIL of five places where Lebanese farmers were violating the line by cultivating land on the Israeli side, albeit north of the existing Israeli

technical fence. The farmers had been using the land for several years, and Israel was not demanding the immediate cessation of these activities but, in view of the security implications, was seeking a system to monitor them. After investigation, UNIFIL raised this matter with the Lebanese authorities.

13. From 17 to 23 June 2000, the Secretary-General visited the Middle East, including Egypt, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon and the Syrian Arab Republic. He also stopped in Rabat, where he met King Mohammed V of Morocco, and Casablanca, where he met Crown Prince Abdullah of Saudi Arabia. The implementation of Security Council resolution 425 (1978) was the principal topic of discussion at those meetings. The Special Envoy joined the Secretary-General for part of the trip and followed up in meetings with the Israeli and Lebanese authorities from 6 to 14 July.

14. The Government of Lebanon has stated that it would consent to the deployment of UNIFIL to the vacated areas only after the Israeli violations have been corrected. It would then also deploy additional troops and internal security forces to the area. For its part, the Government of Israel has committed itself to the removal of all Israeli violations by the end of July. Nevertheless, during the second week of July, Israeli activity was noticed north of the line of withdrawal in three locations. This activity has since ceased. At the time of reporting, the Israeli authorities had corrected all but two of the violations identified by UNIFIL.

Current situation

15. Since the end of May, the situation in the area of operation has remained generally calm. There have been signs of tension between members of Hezbollah and Amal, reportedly over the elections that are to be held in Lebanon at the end of August or early in September. There was a violent incident on 15 July, when elements of Hezbollah and Amal clashed in the town of Markabe, resulting in the death of three Hezbollah members and injury to one. The persons involved have been arrested. The Lebanese army, gendarmerie, and police established checkpoints in the vacated area, controlling movement and maintaining law and order. The Lebanese army retrieved heavy weapons abandoned by IDF/DFF. UNIFIL patrolled the area and, together with the Lebanese authorities, provided humanitarian assistance by supplying water, medical treatment and food to needy families. UNIFIL also assisted former members of the de facto forces and their families who decided to return from Israel to Lebanon. To date, 223 persons have returned to Lebanon through the Ras an Naqoura crossing point.

16. The situation has been calm along the line of withdrawal, except for an area near Metulla where people gather daily on the Lebanese side to throw stones over the technical fence in the direction of IDF personnel. On two occasions, Israel Defence Forces responded by shooting rubber-bullets, injuring two Lebanese and four Jordanian civilians. There were also reports of injuries on the Israeli side of the fence. UNIFIL has repeatedly asked the Lebanese authorities and local leaders to intervene to end this potentially dangerous activity.

17. UNIFIL monitors the line of withdrawal on a daily basis, by means of ground and air patrols. It examines possible violations from both sides of the line, as many of the areas can only be accessed from the Israeli side, owing to the presence of mines and unexploded ordnance on the Lebanese side. The Force's liaison arrangements now provide a constant link with the Chief of Operations of the Israel Defence Forces and the Director of Lebanese General Security, as well as with the normal chain of command on each side. Any violations of the withdrawal line are immediately brought to the attention of the side concerned. Armed elements continue to maintain a presence in the area, and on a number of occasions have not allowed UNIFIL patrols to continue. The Lebanese authorities have promised that such incidents would stop.

Humanitarian and economic issues

18. The reintegration of the relatively underdeveloped area vacated by the Israel Defence Forces imposes a heavy burden on the Lebanese economy. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) has been leading the efforts of the United Nations system in working with the Lebanese authorities on a programme for the development and rehabilitation of the area, with emphasis on rebuilding infrastructure, loans to small enterprises, vocational training, and reactivating the municipalities. Immediate needs include the provision of drinking water to villages that used to be supplied from Israel, the rehabilitation of medical services,

electricity and sewage systems, housing and road networks.

19. After more than two decades of hostilities, the clearing of mines and unexploded ordnance is a large and urgent task. The Israel Defence Forces have provided UNIFIL with maps of mined areas known to them, but the majority remain unmarked. On 19 June, UNIFIL established a Regional Mine Action Coordination Cell to conduct mine awareness education activities. A liaison mechanism involving all actors in south Lebanon is being established in close coordination with the national authorities. While UNIFIL will carry out mine clearing in support of its operations, other United Nations agencies, including UNDP, the United Nations Children's Fund, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, together with the Lebanese National Demining Office, will address the broader needs of the area.

20. The Government of Lebanon, in close cooperation with the organizations of the United Nations system, will host a meeting of donors on 27 July in Beirut to launch the process of coordinating international support to south Lebanon. A donor pledging conference is scheduled for later in the year.

III. Augmentation and redeployment of the Mission

21. In his report of 22 May, the Secretary-General described the additional means required by UNIFIL to carry out its tasks under resolutions 425 (1978) and 426 (1978) following the Israeli withdrawal (S/2000/460, paras. 31-34). The first phase of the reinforcement of UNIFIL is under way. In June, the mine-clearance capacity of UNIFIL was reinforced with two units from Sweden and Ukraine. In addition, an engineer battalion of 600 all ranks from Ukraine will arrive in UNIFIL by the end of July. Finland is providing an additional 64 armoured personnel carriers, of which 42 have arrived in theatre. The units from Finland, Ghana, Ireland and Nepal have been reinforced; Fiji and India have also undertaken to reinforce their units. Two additional helicopters from Italy are expected to arrive by the end of the month.

22. The United Nations has yet to receive commitments for the additional two infantry battalions that would meet the requirements, namely a high degree of self-sufficiency and the capability to deploy to the mission area using national assets. In the absence of these reinforcements, the Force Commander has devised a deployment plan using existing resources and reinforcements to cover the area vacated by the Israel Defence Forces, through a combination of mobile patrols, patrol bases and temporary observation posts.

23. The United Nations is in touch with potential contributors, concerning additional requirements for monitoring the airspace and territorial waters.

24. As at 14 July, UNIFIL comprised 5,075 troops, from Fiji (592), Finland (632), France (251), Ghana (783), India (619), Ireland (656), Italy (46), Nepal (712), Poland (630), Sweden (44) and Ukraine (110). UNIFIL was assisted in its tasks by 51 military observers of the United Nations Truce Supervision Organization (UNTSO). UNIFIL employed 464 civilian staff, of whom 120 were recruited internationally and 344 locally. Major General Seth Kofi Obeng (Ghana) continued as Force Commander.

25. Five members of the Force have regrettably lost their lives during the reporting period. Four Irish soldiers were killed in a traffic accident. A Fijian soldier was shot dead by another soldier of his unit. Since its establishment, 234 members of the Force have lost their lives: 78 as a result of firings or bomb explosions, 98 as a result of accidents and 58 from other causes. A total of 343 were wounded by firing or by mine or bomb explosions.

IV. Financial matters

26. The General Assembly, by its resolution 54/267 of 15 June 2000, appropriated an amount of $146.8 million gross, equivalent to a monthly rate of $12.2 million gross, for the maintenance of the Force for the period from 1 July 2000 to 30 June 2001, subject to the extension of the mandate by the Security Council.

27. This appropriation does not take into account the additional requirements needed by the Force to carry out its responsibilities under Security Council resolutions 425 (1978) and 426 (1978) as indicated in the report of 22 May (S/2000/460, paras. 31-34). It is therefore the Secretary-General's intention to submit to the General Assembly, during its fifty-fifth regular session, revised budget proposals for the Force. In the interim, the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions has expressed its concurrence

with the use of the approved initial 12-month budget for the Force for the period from 1 July 2000 to 30 June 2001 to meet the cost of the most immediate operational requirements relating to the responsibilities referred to above.

28. As at 30 June 2000, unpaid assessments to the Special Account for UNIFIL for the period from the inception of the Force to 30 June 2000 amounted to $117.8 million. Total outstanding assessed contributions for all peacekeeping operations at the same date amounted to $1,970.5 million.

V. Observations

29. During this mandate period, southern Lebanon has seen dramatic change. The Israeli forces have left, their local Lebanese auxiliary is disbanded, and after more than two decades the guns have fallen silent. The Israeli withdrawal was unilateral and not coordinated with the Lebanese authorities. Fortunately, the risks inherent in such a withdrawal did not, for the most part, materialize. I note, in particular, that the fighters of the Lebanese resistance conducted themselves in a controlled manner that deserves to be acknowledged; there were no acts of vengeance as they reclaimed the area vacated by the Israeli forces. The Lebanese authorities have assured my Special Envoy that those who cooperated with the Israeli forces during the years they lived under their control would be treated in accordance with the rule of law. They should be judged fairly and in accordance with internationally accepted human rights standards.

30. In my report of 16 June, I informed the Security Council of the misgivings both sides have about the line of withdrawal identified by the United Nations on the ground. These misgivings will have to be addressed in due course in the context of a formal border demarcation. Both sides have nevertheless undertaken to respect the line of withdrawal. It is crucial that they adhere scrupulously to this commitment and continue to act responsibly and with restraint, to avoid any incidents that could lead to an escalation of tensions in this sensitive area.

31. While an enormous improvement compared to the past, the situation in the Israel-Lebanon sector falls well short of peace, and the potential for serious incidents still exists. Both sides should therefore maintain effective liaison with UNIFIL and take prompt action to rectify any violations or incidents brought to their attention. I have asked Major General Obeng to discuss with the Israeli and Lebanese authorities how the existing liaison arrangements might be further strengthened.

32. In a letter addressed to me on 11 July (S/2000/674), the Permanent Representative of Lebanon conveyed his Government's request that the Security Council extend the mandate of UNIFIL for a further interim period of six months, that is until 31 January 2001. I recommend that the Security Council accede to this request, on the understanding that the Force will be enabled to deploy and function fully throughout its area of operation, and that the Lebanese authorities will strengthen their own presence in the area, as they have already decided, by deploying additional troops and internal security forces. There is a good chance to achieve in the coming months the objectives of Security Council resolution 425 (1978) and for UNIFIL to complete the tasks originally assigned to it. I intend to report to the Security Council at the end of October so that it may review developments and consider any steps it may wish to take, in the light of progress achieved in the restoration of the effective authority of the Government of Lebanon in the area.

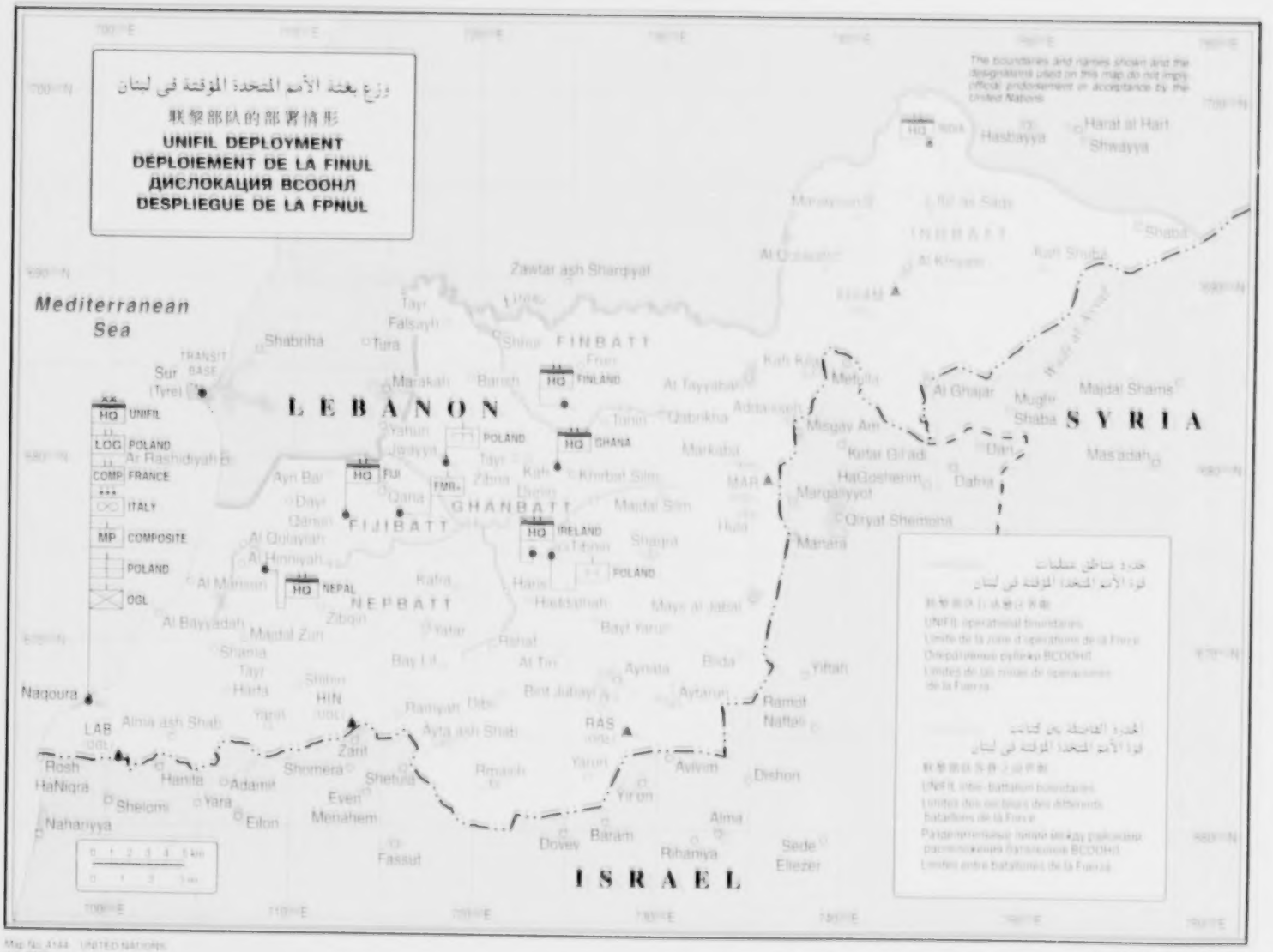
33. In this regard it is essential that the redeployment of UNIFIL be closely coordinated with the Lebanese forces that will be deployed in the same area. This is currently the subject of discussions between Major General Obeng and the Lebanese military authorities. I am pursuing with potential contributors the strengthening of the Force. I hope to be able to inform the Security Council in the near future of the outcome of these contacts.

34. The reintegration of an area that has been cut off from the rest of the country for many years imposes a heavy burden on Lebanon. In addition, the clearance of mines and unexploded ordnance, which poses a serious hazard to the population, will be a vast task, requiring international assistance. I should like to encourage Member States to cooperate with the Government of Lebanon and the United Nations agencies and programmes in support of the reconstruction and development of the area, not only for its own sake but as an important contribution to stability in this potentially still volatile part of the world. Also, in order to help coordinate United Nations activities with regard to the south, it is my intention to appoint a

senior official to serve as my representative in Beirut. This representative will work closely with my Special Envoy, Terje Roed-Larsen.

35. I must again draw attention to the serious shortfall in the funding of the Force. At present, unpaid assessments amount to $117.8 million. This represents money owed to the Member States contributing the troops that make up the Force. I should like to express my gratitude to those Governments for their steadfast support. I appeal to all Member States to pay their assessments promptly and in full and to clear all remaining arrears.

36. In conclusion, I wish to pay a special tribute to Mr. Roed-Larsen and those who have worked with him for their tireless efforts, and to Major General Seth Kofi Obeng and the men and women under his command for the manner in which they have carried out their difficult and often dangerous task. Their discipline and bearing have been of a high order, reflecting credit on themselves and their countries as well as on the United Nations.



Map No. 3144 UNITED NATIONS
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